4

Right of War.

Rev. xix. 11, 13.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that rode upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God."

It is worthy of remark that those sects which have most condemned all resort to coercion for the attainment or vindication of moral order in human affairs, have attributed to the Divine government the employment of force without stint. While trying to empty the natural realm of everything terrible, they have believed in a preternatural in which it occupies the greatest share. Proclaiming the principle of love to be the one heavenly sentiment which lifts us into affinity with the Highest, and forbidding in its name either retribution or constraint, they yet threaten us at the hand of God with the very wrath which it is wicked to allow, and draw pictures of penal judgments from which his forgiveness will never release. They

denounce the intrinsic sinfulness of war; yet believe that under the Jewish dispensation the Holiest commanded it in its most exterminating form. They object to corporal chastisement; yet devoutly read that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit when he struck Elymas the sorcerer blind. They disapprove of the punishment of death for even the most revolting crimes; yet in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, do not scruple to see Peter miraculously visit it upon a lie. They seek a kingdom of God which disowns every agency but the appeal to conscience and the pleading of affection; yet expect its realization in an Advent guarded with flaming swords, by a Son of God bringing "vengeance on them that know not God," and through the sentence of sweeping exile into an "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Strange inconsistency! as if what were guilt on earth could be holiness in heaven; and the universe could be administered on principles, and in its final issues could express affections, which it would prove a man unregenerate to feel! It only proves how little the human mind can really dispense with the rule of retributory justice: how, if removed from one part of existence, it will assert itself in another; how love, when separated from it, though aiming to set itself forth as a divine perfection, turns out to be a human weakness; and how the stock of physical force and fiery terrors in this universe is felt, after all, to have

its proper function and its ultimate destination in vindicating the Law of God, and securing to the good its final triumph over evil.

The Christian rule of "forgiveness" (it has been shown) does not enable us to pardon *moral guilt*, but only *personal affront*. It does not release us from the obligations of justice, which constrain us to deal with men according to their character, to hinder the wrong and help the right. It exempts no one of the resources at our disposal,—persuasion, discipline, power,—from free use in this service; and if, by letting any of them lie idle, we permit an injustice we might prevent, we are in the sight of heaven accomplices in its perpetration. Bodily strength, and the skill which arms it with mechanical increase, are as much intrusted to us for this end as any faculty of thought and affection; and to maintain that we may employ it in the service of our own convenience and luxury, but not in the defence of innocence and the repulse of guilt, is an incomprehensible and untenable paradox. Indeed everyone who puts his money in an iron safe, or a chain upon his house door, relinquishes his reliance on the appeal of reason and conscience, and accepts the aid of material power. And if, further, he has ever restrained the arm, or chastised the disobedience of a passionate child; if he has availed himself of the services of the police to arrest and the courts to try the offender against his person or

goods; if, in short, he consents to have a place in civil society at all; he has engaged himself, by active coercion, in resistance to evil, and in his private capacity *gone to war* with the delinquencies he meets.

Nay, in the earlier stages of every historical community, the ends of justice, now so quietly obtained, were literally accomplished no otherwise than by *going to war*. Natural resentment, individual moral indignation, rising against the evil-doer and hurling him out, is the first protection which heaven provides against unjust aggression. The sympathy of observers prevents the strife remaining single, and soon supplies a law which the one combatant is glad to accept, and the other forced to obey. The neighbourhood however long continues small through which the same authority is acknowledged, and the weapons of personal defence laid down on its behalf. In the next village, or the next barony, another tribunal is obeyed; and a dispute between the two circles is settled by trial of local arms, adjoining districts often taking sides. A succession of such struggles disengages at last, and fixes in distinct form, the moral judgment of a wider circle, and erects a court of larger jurisdiction to interpret and enforce it. But while private feuds are thus banished between barony and barony, they may still break out between county and county, till by similar experience a common feeling is found which covers a broader area, and insists

on its verdict of right. With widening intercourse and more settled relations the range of public law extends; till at last province has no longer border-wars with province, but settles its cause by Imperial appeal. Throughout this process, what is the moving spring, the real natural force, which conducts the march of security and order?—what but the human indignation at wrong,—at first isolated and momentary; but gradually feeling its way to concurrence in expanding circles, till it organizes itself into national law? Had that primitive anger never struck a blow, no rudiment of social rights would have appeared. It is the arms of yesterday that have won the field of justice for to-day; and the fairest growths of peace have roots not unwatered by blood. And after all, Law in the last resort can but *economise* force, and does not *dispense with it*. It transfers the weapon from the private to the public hand, and stops the lavish violence of individual passion. But what would be the value of a judiciary without an executive visible behind it? What else is the whole penal administration of a country but its perennial civil war against its own incorrigible criminals?

Far be it from me to say that the process of pacification which replaces the warrior by the judge must necessarily stop with the limits of each country. As the barriers disappear which hinder the sympathy of land with land, the sense of a common justice and an eventual

common interest cannot fail to spread; and already its beginnings are traced in the faint and uncertain outlines of International Law. But at present the group of European nations are in corresponding relative positions to barouies of the same county, ere yet there was any dominant power to summon them to its tribunal; and as the struggle of castle with castle, and the alliances of chief with chief, were the meaus of ascertaining the common feeling, and working out the balance of a common right; so, if States are ever to be brought into a court of general jurisdiction, they have yet to win by a like experience of conflict both the code which is to be there administered, and the cosmopolitian executive which shall enforce its decrees. Meanwhile, we are neighbours, each with his own trust, his own conscieuce, and his own force; bound to keep what is committed to us, and not to stand by while wanton wrong is done. For these ends we have no guiding law but the sympathies of justice which bring States iuto generous alliance; and no administrative power but those armed battalions which are the only police of nations. A people without an army is chargeable with more than folly. It refuses its fair contributiou to the police of the world; aud if, while the power is there, it selfishly looks on, though murder it might prevent is passing before its eyes, its staudard blazous forth a lie, and becomes the symbol, not of order, but of auarchy. As the feuds of individuals

and clans have been the parents of municipal law, so the hostile collisions of nations are the necessary conditions under which, if at all, an authoritative code can clear itself for the States of the civilized world. The path to the court of justice lies, alas! through the camp of war.

If this be so,—then there is no propriety in limiting the right of using force to the case of self-defence. Even using the word in its widest acceptation, and understanding by the nation's *Self* not its territory only, but its whole essence and genius, its children, its arts, its honour, its place in the world, still it is not this alone for which it holds its gift of strength. To others as well as to itself it has to see that right is done; and if with Cain-like sullenness it asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" the God of retributive history replies, "Thy brother's blood calleth to me from the ground." The justifying plea of war is not personal danger, but moral equity; which indeed gives the title to protect yourself, but also imposes the duty of protecting others. There is an astounding meanness in this doctrine of modern casuistry, that an injury may be resisted if it be against yourself, but must be let alone if it fall upon your neighbour; as if your sacred person in particular were the turning point of moral good and evil; and it were LO rule that the strong are to help the weak, but only that the strong may help themselves! Defend yourself by all means;

but see to it that you defend yourself because it is right; and not your right because it is your own. There is a curse upon selfishness in States, not less than in individuals. Often indeed a nation wins its first moral greatness in struggles for its own freedom, and from the sufferings and heroisms of that time makes up the earliest crown of brilliants that history puts upon its brow. But it can preserve no enduring nobleness if the power it has vindicated be used in no service but its own, and amid the ferment of humanity it cares for nothing but its securities and gains. Generous sympathy and self-denying action are just as indispensable a discipline for a collective people as for each man among the mass; if you despise the wealthy recluse who shuts himself up in his country house, without a thought that disturbs his ease, whether for the worthy enterprises of his equals, or for the sins and miseries of the village at his Park-gate, how can you praise a State that never listens to the groans of oppression, or spares its cruse of oil to feed any lamp of foreign liberty? And what common action can a nation have, what magnanimous sacrifices can it make for others' good as well as God's justice, unless it takes its responsible place in the council chamber of the world, and causes its voice to be respected for faithfulness and resolution? It is only foreign matters, problems starting up in the great commonwealth of States, that can ever call a nation

ont of itself, and by directing an enthusiasm abroad, clasp it in gennine nnity at home. Every other influence is either personal, sectional, or world-wide ; this alone finds expression for the conntry's heart, and opens for it its distinctive place in history. Boast is made of commerce, as knitting the bonds of sympathy between land and land. It may link the sea-board of many a latitnde, but it nnites the hearts of none ; it is rich in geographical distribntion, bnt not in historical creation ; it is the expression of self-interest, not of self-forgetfnlness ; it is the specnlation of individnals, not the enterprise of the State. And if anyone thinks that its grandest scale and hugest capital can constitnte the life of a great people, let him ask the muse of history what she has to tell of Phœnicia, bnt stupid traditions of monster ships and universal factories, and vile idolatries and Cornish tin ; what also of Carthage, except her one military effort, and her one great hero whom her merchant princes hated and disgraced ; and what, in comparison, of sterile Attica, which, in the name of Enrope to this hour, denied its earth and water to Asiatic despotism, and not only earned a glorions existence for herself, but on the field of the world substitnted for Oriental monotony the priceless example of Hellenic beanty, simplicity, strength and wisdom. It is the sympathy of person for person that puts a soul into private life, and makes it human with pity and love ; of class for class, that gives to a nation

manly vigour and a fearless brow; of nation with nation, that touches the world with moral nobleness, and turns history from a statistic almanac or a volume of price-currents into the Epic of humanity,—nay, the very biography of God. What makes the sixteenth century so rich a page in British and European annals? Do you suppose it was the mere dogma of Wittenberg or Geneva? When the dogma triumphed the glory was gone. No! it was the fellow feeling of one struggling Church through many nations; the flash of pity and the cry of shame that darted on the Netherlands, crushed and tortured by the tyranny of Spain; the eye kindling with sympathy towards the young life and faith of the time, watchful against sacerdotal conspiracy, and eager for openings to help against oppression. The torpor of selfish ease was broken; foreign ideas stirred the intellect; foreign admirations moved the heart; foreign persecutions quickened the pulse with generous resolve; and the high consciousness of a responsible place in the family of nations and the courses of time gave to England a dignity of mien and thought which she has scarce known since.

No doubt, this openness, on adequate occasion, to mingle in moral struggles of the world involves a readiness for war; and must be regulated by the clear sense how dreadful is the scourge of war. On its miseries and horrors I will not dwell; they are such

as to render a selfish, a rash, an ill-ordered war the greatest of crimes; but they are *not* such as to justify us in preferring, when we can prevent, the triumph of wrong. Those who in this argument draw in detail the picture of the battlefield, the siege, the hospital, the mourning homes, the crippled bodies, the wasted treasures, involved in the conflict of great nations, practise deception on themselves and contribute little to the solution of the moral problem. In such painting both the spirit and the scale of these things are falsely presented, because falsely compared. Wounds inflicted, wounds received by men acting as the organs of a higher personality, and inspired by a sense of fidelity and honour to a power that has a right to wield them at its will, are not the same things as cuts in the private flesh made upon their own account; not debasing the giver, and glorifying the suffering to the receiver. And however awful the dimensions of this evil measured by the standard of the individual observer, taking himself as the unit, and multiplying that unit in imagination till it covers the statistics of privation and death, their magnitude is very different when estimated by their fractional relation to the unity of a people's life. Even to decimate one of its generations, what would this be as the price of that self-respect and faithfulness without which the very terms of existence are ignoble, and the most comfortable of populations is nothing but a blot upon the world?

Where God embodies great principles iu historic forms, and makes mighty nations the organs and medium of moral conflict, it cannot be expected that the arbitrament should take place without a piercing shriek of the hour, wailing and dying down the wiuds of time. There is no chloroform for earthquakes; the giaut mountain heaves and cracks with its throes; but wheu the equilibrium returns, the villages rise again, the plough cleaves again the resting soil, the vine-trellice reappears upon the slope, and the Spring field smiles beneath the suu once more.

The objection is often brought against the morality of war, that the soldier is not the priucipal in the quarrel, but hires himself to kill, without regard to the rectitude of the cause. The remark appears to me essentially unjust iu two respects. He does not hire himself out to kill; killiug is uot the end of an armed force, but only the possible means by which it may enforce its defence of right. As well might you say that the surgeon exists for the sake of *wounding;* or that the appreheusion aud incarceration of a culprit by the police was kidnapping a man into slavery. And that he is agent of a higher authority, obliged to act without option of his own, is equally true of every public servant. The Judge engages in like mauuer to award punishment, not excepting the alternative of life or death, according to the law as he finds it, be it according to his private estimate of equity or

not. Nor as a general rule is there anything degrading in *this* surrender of individual judgment. To go into the hands of a *lower* authority than ourselves is indeed debasing; but to act as the vehicles of a higher personality, whose decisions have natural right over us, is an ennobling sacrifice of self-will; it quiets the egotism of the part, in presence of the Duty of the whole. To what extent precisely this renunciation of individual judgment may go, is no doubt a delicate question, which comes back upon us in a hundred forms, and has to be practically answered every day by the Statesman, the advocate, the ecclesiastic,—in truth by all who have to act in a representative as well as a personal capacity. And cases cannot fail to arise in which the private conscience is at positive variance with the public,—is preoccupied,— like the mind of the early Friends,— with intense convictions clashing with recognized national obligations. For such a conjuncture what solution shall we find? Is the Christian citizen to violate his sense of Right?—Or is the Commonwealth to resign its claim upon him? Neither the one nor the other; it is the Duty of the State to enforce; it is the duty of the individual to resist; till out of the moral struggle between them the disputed problem clears itself, and the appeal to the judicial conscience of humanity has been adequately heard and answered. Like the pleas of two suitors in court, such con-

troversies may quite well be honourable on both sides; aud only by tho trial of spiritual strength which they involve can the rude public conception of Right be purified of tyranny, aud the scruples of individuals discover their eccentricity. But these are exceptioual collisions. In the usual course of national history we are not to presume on any such contrariety between persoual and social obligation; and where they are in that healthy degree of accordance which a State like ours secures, there is nothing unworthy of a noble mind in becoming the executive organ of national resolve.

Even the terrible right—or rather the steru trust—of Arms, I do not hesitate to claim for every righteous State. With that last arbitrament, however, all questions cease. It is the confession of something irresolvable by Reason, irresolvable by Right; it is a solemn appeal to the collective forces, spiritual no less than material, which God has shut up iu our humanity. Hero, therefore, the Christian moralist comes to the end of his theme; owns that his priuciples avail to settle nothing more; that all beyond is iudeterminate except in the couusels of eternal Provideuce. In surveying the great natural relations of the civilized world, I have endeavoured to draw them within the lines of a Divine order; to make them unconditionally ameuable to universal Moral Law, which holds all races, times, and latitudes; to vindicate (on these terms) the conditional right of each people to its

special genius and forms of good; to find a place, in this view, for the varieties and inequalities of men, their local love, their alien languages, their inherited traditions; to insist on the responsible personality of nations, binding them to veracity and honour, and making selfish isolation shameful; and to show that not the will and word alone, but the force also, of a people must be held at the disposal of those high trusts for which it has a life given to it in history.

When, in the light of these thoughts, we look at the great features of our time, signs of promise meet us everywhere, which the shadows of war and the cloud in the west are insufficient to eclipse. There is a temper abroad,—a league of silent sympathy, a consciousness of mutual duty, among the directing minds and earnest classes of many European countries, in the presence of which even tyrannies have to rest upon their *character*, and Superstition to make terms with Reason. The resurrection of a great nation,—its sudden entrance among us with the seals of its sleep broken and its infirmities left behind, is naturally followed by a political Pentecost, which pours out a new spirit on us all. Its marvellous examples, of heroic resolve, of wisdom in counsel, of moderation in act, have been upon a scale which forbids despondency even under irreparable loss, and fills us again with living faith in the future of the world. What form that future may assume it is not ours to see. But we may

be sure it will harmonize with the progressiveness of God's ways; and so fair is its first gleam that the young may well rejoice to enter, the old regret to leave, the stage on which it will appear.

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